

# BAIT

UK (2019) 89 minutes

Director: Mark Jenkin

Cast: Martin Ward (Edward Rowe), Steven Ward (Giles King),  
Sandra Leigh (Mary Woodvine), Tim Leigh (Simon Shepherd)



Screening 01 September 2021 at Swindon Arts Centre

## Synopsis

Martin Ward is a Cornish fisherman, without a boat. His brother Steven has re-purposed their father's vessel as a tourist tripper, driving a wedge between the brothers. With their childhood home now a get-away for London money, Martin is displaced to the estate above the picturesque harbour. As his struggle to restore the family to their traditional place creates increasing friction with tourists and locals alike, a tragedy at the heart of the family changes his world.

## Reviews



Cornish film-maker Mark Jenkin has created an arrestingly strange adventure in zero-budget analogue cinema. It's black-and-white, shot with a Bolex cine-camera on 16mm film and developed in such a way as to create ghostly glitches and scratches on the print. A bizarre expressionist melodrama, it has the huge close-ups and crashingly emphatic narrative grammar of early cinema and, like home movies, it has dialogue overdubs and ambient noise that could well be taken from a sound-effects LP. But it's very effective, and the monochrome cinematography desentimentalises the Cornish landscape, turning it into an anti-postcard.

The weirdness of *Bait* can't be overestimated; it's like an episode of *EastEnders* directed by FW Murnau. Martin Ward is a fisherman, a gloweringly aggressive man who resents the incomers who have taken over his village. Fishing is in decline. Where once his industry used bait to catch fish, now the whole community and the beautiful landscape are used as bait to catch tourists. Only it feels as if the tourists are the ones who have the locals in their net.

*Peter Bradshaw, The Guardian*

What is cinema for? To delight? To tell stories? To illuminate the rifts in this fractured world? By any of these measures, *Bait* is a triumph. It is powered by social tensions. In one corner: down-on-his-luck local fisherman Martin Ward. In the other: the forces of gentrification as embodied by the Leighs, an out-of-towner family.

Shot on black and white 16mm film, later hand-processed by director Jenkin, and with a soundscape fully created in post-production, *Bait* harmonises every element of cinema to create a shiver-inducing ambience which lends heft to the emotions at play. Jenkin (a prolific short filmmaker) uses his social set-up to create a symbolic battle that resonates in a post-austerity UK where the gulf between rich and poor only seems to grow, yet his characters are shaded by enough humanity to make their reactions unpredictable. Each sequence is full of overwhelmingly pleasurable visual texture thanks to the prickly romance of the black-and-white grain and Jenkin's rapturous framing. Everything – a pint of beer, lapping waves, brooding faces – is captured with an infectious love of tactile detail.

*Sophie Monks Kaufman, Empire*

## Film Facts

- The film received critical acclaim and accolades for Mark Jenkin including a 2020 BAFTA Award for Outstanding Debut by a British Writer, Director or Producer.
- Set in his native Cornwall, Jenkin's locations include Charlestown and West Penwith.
- An influence in Jenkin's early film-making was Derek Jarman's experimental film *The Garden* (1990), set in Jarman's garden at Prospect Cottage, Dungeness, Kent.

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